Synopsis

Most thinking people could be expected to have an idea of what life is and is to be. It will be reasonable to expect also that such a 'vision of life' would never be the same in two given persons. The vision of a mystic is bound to vary from that of an ordinary human being in every possible way, being undoubtedly sublime and noble at the core and with the great link with the philosophical and transcendental dimensions it is bound to envelope. It is normal to suppose that the mystic's thoughts and deeds voluntarily, selflessly and perpetually extend to the realms of serving humanity by performing the extra-human task of dispelling the darkness from the minds of the people who come in contact with the mystic and respond in a positive way. It is also true that the mystic lives not merely for his age alone, but for all future ages too. Thus the 'elevated status' of a mystic makes him a *yogi* whose vision extends beyond the perceived and the perceivable from the point of view of the multitudes. The scriptures say that only such a *yogi* qualifies to be a '*Guru'* for, most appropriately, the word, '*Guru'* in Sanskrit means 'the dispeller of darkness' ('*gu*' referring to 'darkness' and '*ru'* to a 'destroyer').

This holy land, '*Bharatham*' has seen, from time immemorial, a grand lineage of such '*Gurus'* whose advent has helped 'dispel the darkness' of the particular age and influenced several future eras. The 'light' of their wisdom blessed and consoled humanity through their 'contemplative way of solving human problems' (Nataraja Guru, 73**).** They lived and died as epitomes of the *satvik* qualities like kindliness, love and compassion, and "were all lovers of humanity and truth" (Nataraja Guru, 65). The 'light' and life of great souls like the Budha, Aadi Sankara and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa continue to inspire and

nourish seekers, not only in India, but across the length and breadth of different lands on the globe.

A spiritually enlightened seer of such caliber qualifies himself to be one with the divine and gain mystic visions in the acme of his spiritual experience. The expression of these visions flows down as great poetry from the deepest recesses of this noble soul naturally, if the circumstances demand it and the times are to benefit from such poetic expression. The seer, usually, has no control over the outpourings of his own mystic vision. To the common man such poetry becomes revelations, permitting him a peep into the beyond or what is commonly acknowledged as the knowledge of the spirit resulting from the direct and intuitive experience of the mystic regarding the Supreme Reality. Such knowledge of the spiritual is gained also through transcendental meditation, and becomes the experience of the joy of Divine Bliss. The quest of the human mind has always been to know the Divine, the Ultimate truth of things or to enjoy the blessedness of actual communion with the Highest Truth. The mystic who gets such visions of life, of Gods, of man and of Nature as revelation and makes supreme revelatory utterance in poetry arising out of that inexplicable experience, also becomes to the common man, undoubtedly, the seer of poetic truth.

Looking back at the rich literary heritage of India, it is easy to find that Indian poetry has been enriched by several great visionaries, some call them *rishis*, and sages from time immemorial. The Vedas and the Upanishads are records of the deepest spiritual experiences of this kind in which philosophy, religion and poetry have united to become the rarest of spiritual revelation humanity has seen. They inevitably rise to the discovery of the supreme *Brahman* who is acknowledged in the land of its origin as that which stands

for the Ultimate Reality or the Cosmic Consciousness which is Eternal, Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent, and which can only be experienced by a mystic during his intuitive experience. *Brahman* is also regarded as the Source and the Essence of this universe and All Creation.

The seers who believe in the *nirguna* aspect of God (god without form) that is Brahman, the one cosmic consciousness, have sought oneness with that divine power. In the *bhakti* tradition, God is conceived as *saguna* (god with a form and a name), and is regarded as manifested with specific qualities. In *bhakti marga*, the seekers' unalloyed devotion, intense love and a total surrender to God, pave the way for them to establish a direct communion with the Infinite along the path of devotion. The *bhakti* poets as well as the mystic poets are equally noble souls and the greatest benefactors of humanity. Their poetic compositions are profound and rich in spirituality and can enlighten and elevate the receptive minds morally and spiritually. The *bhakti* poems, brimming with devotion and love for the Lord also elevate the readers to great emotional levels as to enable them to revel in *bhakti*, while mystic poetry, which is the poetic expression of the deepest spiritual reality can take one to the threshold of the infinitude. Mystic poetry delineates the vision that a seer poet sees intuitively, focuses on the internal rather than the external realities, the inner rather than the outer truth, the spiritual rather than the materialistic truth of the universe.

Sri Aurobindo and Sree Narayana Guru, the great spiritual and mystic poets, have had the visions of the Absolute truth and have expressed their spiritual experiences through the medium of poetry. Their poetry which is clothed in simple language coupled with a sublime content, harmony and rhythm, delineates their intensity of spiritual and mystical

experiences, and also recreates a symbolic vision of the poets' spiritual realization. Sree Narayana Guru, through his compositions brings the wisdom of ancient literature to the common man and he is a true *Advaitin.*

Sree Narayana Guru was a yogi, seer- poet and mystic. The total religious tradition of India which he imbibes is presented in his writings. *Advaita* is the hallmark of Sree Narayana Guru's Philosophy. He has not only revalued *Advaita Vedanta* expounded by Sri Sankaracharya but also woven this philosophy of non-duality in the warp and woof of his poems. *Advaita* in its essence is a spiritual experience. A mystic through introspection and contemplation experiences this identity between the Self *(jiva*) and the Infinite (*Brahman*). Sree Narayana Guru has applied the pearls of this ancient wisdom to cultivate good values in human life and effected a transformation in the collective consciousness of the society which was then in the grip of social aberrations like untouchability and casteism. He lived in an era when society was "segmented and stratified on the basis of caste – which was the deciding factor in every aspect of social life. Colossal disparities and grave injustices were perpetrated in the name of caste" (M.K. Sanoo, 58). It was this inhuman denouncement of man by man that prevailed in the social scenario of Kerala then that made Swami Vivekananda call Kerala a 'lunatic asylum.' The social scenario in the clutches of untouchability and slavery drew a dismal picture of this land and distanced it from the principles of the *Sanatana Dharma* recognized as the life-force and tradition of the land of *Bharath*. He revalued *Advaita Vedanta* to suit the requirements of his age and he used the concept of the Oneness of Brahman and its manifestations as an ideological weapon to fight against these. This idea of 'oneness' is propounded in his visionary poems like *Advaita Deepika, Atmopadesa Satakam, Darsana Mala* and *Daiva Dasakam.* As a true *karma yogi*,

the Guru propagated the essence of *Advaita* and put it into action in a society in which the downtrodden are relegated and ill treated.

His visionary poems spring from his intuitive experience and serve as an impetus to mould the outlook of the people and to reform the society. His poems written in the three languages namely Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil, clearly portray the depth of his mystical experience. They are undoubtedly great poetic compositions that dwell at the pinnacle of poetic beauty in the literary scenario. These thought provoking poems which are contemplative in nature, underlie great visions. *Atmopadesa Satakam*, *Daiva Dasakam Darsana Mala*, and *Advaitadeepika* are some of the poems in which *Advaita darsana* has been scientifically dealt with. These poems also reflect his delineation of the relationship between the Absolute truth and the *Prapancha*, and the existence of one causal reality, his vision of oneness of all beings.

Sri Aurobindo, a great scholar, political leader, journalist, literary critic, an original interpreter of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita, is a *yogi*, philosopher and seer- poet. The crux of his philosophy is integral yoga. Sri Aurobindo says that the object of yoga is to love the Divine for the Divine's sake alone, and life to be the instrument of the Divine and to transform life by bringing down into it the Light, Power, and Bliss of the divine Truth and its dynamic certitudes. What makes his spirituality unique is his philosophy of evolution of the consciousness and the divine transformation of the entire cosmos. Unlike other yogis who tried to divinize themselves and attained Nirvana by realizing Self, he goes a step ahead in bringing down the divine power onto the earth, thus effecting the divinization of the entire cosmos: the transformation of the Earth life into the Divine life. "The realization of Self and of Cosmic being (without which the realization of self is

incomplete) are essential steps in our Yoga; it is the end of other Yogas, but it is, as it were beginning of ours…" (*Integral Yoga* 36)

Contrary to Sri Sankara's *Advaita* where he dismisses the world as *maya* or illusion or a series of births from which one has to escape, Sri Aurobindo accepts the value of cosmic existence and considers it to be real and "as a field of manifestation in which there is a progressive evolution of the soul and the nature in Matter through Life and Mind to what is beyond Mind till it reaches the complete revelation of *Saccidananda* in life" (29). This is the basis of his yoga.

He says that the object of *yoga* is to establish a direct contact with the divine consciousness. He comments, "the one aim of Yoga is an inner development by which each one who follows it can in time discover the One Self in all and evolve a higher consciousness than the mental, spiritual and supramental consciousness which will transform and divinize human nature"(97) .

Sri Aurobindo has propounded his ideal from the enlightenment that he has gained through his intuitive and mystic vision and has delineated the philosophy of integral yoga in his poems. His poetry expresses the deepest spiritual experience. Sri Aurobindo's poetic vision is integrated with his philosophy of spiritual evolution. Each of his poems is an expression of his deepest spiritual experience and is rather the *mantra* emanating from his soul. His mystic poem "Thought the Paraclete" depicts a series of visions that he sees intuitively. It also depicts the ascent of the consciousness that flies high on the wings of thought, starting its flight from the Inconscient to the Superconscient, passing different levels of consciousness to merge in the *Saccidananda*. He has clearly portrayed this

philosophical vision in his poems like “Transformation”, “The Golden Light” and “Cosmic Consciousness”.

Savitri, the finely woven epic, is verily Sri Aurobindo’s poetic revelation of his yogic experience. The poet treats the legend of Savitri and Satyavan from the *Mahabharata* and transforms it into great epic dimensions, picturing Aswapathy’s soul soaring high on to the realm of the superconscient to realize the supreme truth and bring it down onto the earth to effect the transformation of earth life divine: thus the legend attains a cosmic significance. The first half of the epic delineates Aswapathy’s yoga while the second half deals with Savitri’s yoga. Savitri is made out as one who has descended on earth with a sublime vision or objective to divinize the cosmos and pave the way for the redemption of mankind by saving Satyavan from Death. The epic is “unique in its sustained grandeur and sublimity, revealing to us plane after plane of spiritual illumination and each plane a tier-terraced mountain” (Khanna, “A Study of Similies in Savitri”, 254).

Sri Aurobindo’s yogic experience, passing through the different planes like higher mind, illumined mind, intuitive mind and over mind, is graphically portrayed through Aswapathy’s yoga as well as Savitri's yoga, the former as the ascent of the consciousness and the latter as the descent of the supreme consciousness to remove death and suffering, the main hitches on the way to self realization and immortality.

He has dealt with the philosophy of integral yoga in this poem rewriting the simple legend into an epic of 24,000 lines – the greatest epic ever written in the English language. Here is the marvel of a simple philosophy blooming into an epic. Compact in its form and thought, profound in its content, this epic is indeed the poetic delineation of his philosophy

of integral yoga that has been propounded in his book *The Life Divine* and in his other philosophical works. Sri Aurobindo has also transformed the legend of Satyavan and Savitri into a symbol of the future.

A detailed analysis of the philosophical visions and mystic experiences of the two poets in their poetry, it has been observed that their modes of approach differ. Sree Narayana Guru practises *Advaita*, the philosophy of non-duality. He believes in the oneness of all human beings and gives utmost importance to contemplative self-realization. He uses the term *arivu* to denote awareness and considers the Universe as blossoming from that divine consciousness and finally merging with it. He perceives the universe as the divine manifestation of *Brahman* which is the only one reality and perceives it in all human beings. His objective is to bring about a transformation in the mindset of human beings by sowing the seeds of compassion and universal brotherhood.

The Guru's philosophical poems help the common man understand that the same divine power resides in every being. He has taught the truth of Non-dual wisdom that the phenomenal world in which the cycle of life and birth occurs is transient. He emphasizes the importance of knowledge of Atman for leading a meaningful life. In his compositions in Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil, the Guru gives expression to highly philosophical ideas and concepts that enlighten the readers' mind and intellect, which in turn, help them lead a very peaceful and happy life.

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of the evolution of the mind through integral yoga is contrary to Sri Sankara's *Advaita* which considers the world an illusion. Sri Aurobindo repudiates Sankara's theory of *Advaita* that only one Supreme reality exists and that the universe is only a creation of Maya and the individual soul nothing but Brahman itself.

The declaration of the *Mayavadins* (those contributing to the theory of 'Maya') is that the world does not exist. Sri Aurobindo holds the view that the world is a manifestation of the Real and therefore it is real. The world is the manifestation of that Reality which is infinite and eternal.

Sri Aurobindo stresses the importance of the evolution of the soul which will bring down the divine or the supra-mental consciousness down to the *sadhak* and it will, in turn, divinize the Universe, thus transforming 'earth life' into 'divine life'. His philosophy of the evolution of mankind is his great contribution to the socio-spiritual life of mankind.

The philosophical visions embodied in Sree Narayana Guru's poems have had a profound influence on the intellectual, spiritual and social life of mankind and they have also served as a force to change the outlook of the people, elevating their minds to a sublime level. He, as a true *jagatguru*, came to enlighten the society of his times by imparting to it the knowledge of the *Upanishadic* wisdom. He also has brought in a social set up where people were taught to lead a life of Universal brotherhood sans caste and religious distinctions. His poems that delve deep into the secret of creation and the underlying causal Reality not only wipe out the aberrations in society but also usher in the renaissance of a new society. His teachings have awakened a society from its nescience and marked a clear revival in their thinking. He tried to impart to others what he himself had imbibed.

Sri Aurobindo is of the view that the entering of the super-mind into earth consciousness would effect in its divine transformation – and for that he renounced his body to bring in the super-mind over to the earth as a result of which the divine power would enter the earth through his body. Through his integral yoga he wants the liberation of mankind, which

will, in turn, ensure harmony and happiness. From his own yogic experience he claims that through his integral yoga, death of the body can be conquered by making the body divine and by evolving the mind to higher levels. This in turn is bound to result in the dawning of the divine power into the mental, vital and subtle physical levels. Sri Aurobindo, the seer-poet is the one who leads that march of mankind to its destiny of a spiritual divine life on earth. Everything that he has written points out his unerring vision of a glorious future for man. This vision has great relevance and implications at the social existence of man.

In the rat race of this materialistic world, visionary poems hold great relevance in the spiritual development of the human psyche. They enable the individual to free himself from the web of ignorance and illusion. They are considered to be the most intense of all the genres of literature for its incantatory and revealing power.

Both Sree Narayana Guru and Sri Aurobindo emphasize the quality of compassion as a binding force that sustains society. Just as Sree Narayana Guru through his philosophy of *Advaita* brought in a renaissance in the social and mental makeup of the people across the country, Sri Aurobindo's ideals of oneness and visions served as a driving force behind the emergence of Auroville, the 'City of Dawn' which is verily the manifestation of Sri Aurobindo's concept of the ideal of human unity. Auroville tells the saga of a sustainable environment, where people would live in close communion with nature irrespective of caste, creed and religion.